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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3401  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6767  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4497  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3118  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7642  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1715  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5051  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 1258  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//  
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7383

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Syria/EU, Syria/South Africa, Syria/Germany,  
Lebanon, Palestinian Territories (4/30)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Apr. 30 reported President Asad's meeting on Apr. 29 with Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid. Talks focused on the situation of Iraqi refugees in Syria, and Michel praised Syria's role in accommodating and supporting them. President Asad reiterated the importance of increasing coordination among Syria, the Iraqi government and the European Commission to improve the situation of Iraqi refugees and ensure them the necessary services, particularly in education and health. Michel stressed the European Commission's readiness to offer expertise and technical and financial aid, in coordination with the Syrian government, to support Iraqi refugees.

Papers also reported VP Shara's and FM Mouallem's meetings on April 29 with South African Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad. Talks focused on current regional and international developments. Viewpoints were identical on the necessity of boosting bilateral ties between the two countries and continuing consultation and coordination between them. Minister Mouallem stressed the importance of South Africa's role, through its non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council, in achieving security and stability in the region. Mr. Pahad hailed Syria's role in the Middle East, pointing out the importance of achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region based on international resolutions.

Papers also reported VP Shara's meeting on Apr. 29 with a German parliamentary delegation, headed by MP Joachim Hoerster. Talks focused on the latest developments in the region, the peace process and obstacles facing it. Shara confirmed Syria's commitment to cooperate in efforts to achieve stability in the region based on UN resolutions. Mr. Hoerster confirmed the important role that Syria could play in treating issues of the region, showing readiness to develop bilateral relations between Syria and Germany. "My visit to Syria aims at inspecting the conditions of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees in Syria," Hoerster added.

Independent Al-Watan quoted informed sources as saying that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's visit to the region aims at

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besieging the Palestinian resistance. The sources criticized the Arab designation of Jordan and Egypt to talk to Israel about

accepting the Arab peace initiative.

End of summary.

## 12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad reviews the status of Iraqi refugees in Syria with EU Commissioner Louis Michel. President Asad confirms continuing coordination among Syria, Iraq and the EU Commission. The European Commissioner: Humanitarian action is a prelude for political dialogue. Syria is unique in its generosity" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/30)

"VP Shara and FM Mouallem discuss current developments and means of boosting bilateral cooperation on all levels, with South African Deputy FM Aziz Pahad" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/30)

"VP Shara discusses the peace process with a German parliamentary delegation" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/30)

"FM Mouallem denies allegations of arms smuggling and says that Syria supports consensus among the Lebanese" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/30)

"Iran announces its participation in the Sharm al-Sheikh Conference; Larijani in Baghdad" (Independent al-Watan, 4/30)

"Olmert unleashes threats against the Palestinian resistance. Israel confiscates more Palestinian land" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/30)

## 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"The Mission Is Over"

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Ali Nasrallah, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/30): "Four years ago US President Bush announced the end of military operations in Iraq with a banner in the background saying mission accomplished.... The US president appears to be one of history's strangest and rarest coincidences; he stands today to threaten the Congress with a veto against a bill linking the funding of the still-continuing war to a withdrawal timetable...."

"The Congressional bill is logical and realistic.... It provides a genuine opportunity to change the course of the war and find a way out of the stalemate and the quagmire in which the Bush administration sank after it wasted other opportunities, the latest being the recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton Committee...."

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"Syria Harbors Pan-Arabism"

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Sa'dallah Barakat, a columnist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, said (4/30): "Damascus' hosting of the Arab and Islamic Media Conference for Supporting the Palestinian People is yet further proof that Syria continues to play its pan-Arab role and to support the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation...."

"Those who have applied pressure on Syria to isolate it and force it to deviate from its pan-Arab positions and principles are once again disappointed...."

"Syria is sure that its approach and positions are correct. Those who organized the campaigns of distortion and pressure against Syria came out empty handed, and here they return to hold dialogue with it and to listen to its wise advice for the good of the peoples of the region and world peace...."

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"Rice's visit to the Region Is Aimed at Besieging  
the Palestinian Resistance"

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An unsigned article in independent Al-Watan on (4/30) reads:

"Informed sources have stressed that the US Secretary of State's visit to the region, and her meeting with the foreign ministers of Arab countries that believe in peace and normalization with Israel, was a workshop to draft new political initiatives aimed at curbing Palestinian resistance lead by HAMAS ....

"The sources said Rice stressed to those who met with her that the United States was unable to apply pressure on the current Israeli government and that she knew the real solution lay in withdrawal to a modified 1967 border. But she claimed that many obstacles still stood in the way and that Arabs needed to encourage the activity of the peace forces in Israel and save the current government from collapse.

"The sources said that the decision to designate Egypt and Jordan to make moves toward Israel and persuade it to accept the Arab initiative reflected Arab despair regarding their ability to impose Arab rights on the Israeli side. They said the decision renders a service to Egypt and Jordan, which have established normal relations with Israel and support Arab normalization with it, but it is drawing wide criticism from local popular circles and elites....

"The sources expressed their belief that assigning them this mission serves the interest of the Israeli side, which considers the two countries the leaders of the moderate Arab forces in the approach to the Palestinian cause. The sources ruled out any tangible results from these moves, which do not rise to the level of obtaining

Palestinian rights. They noted that Egypt and Jordan failed to attain their own rights in full and were forced to make painful concessions from their rights of sovereignty, land, and otherwise to sign the peace agreements.

"The sources warned that the two countries will at best work to persuade the Palestinian side to follow their example, and that the other Arab countries that are enthusiastic Israel will use this as an excuse to legitimize the normalization, which they seek and which some of them are secretly practicing these days.

"At the same time, the sources praised the experience of the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance, which proves that there is another, more effective option that can be adopted collectively to realize Arab objectives, instead of wasting time and trusting the biased mediator that has a strategic alliance with Israel."

Corbin